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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Marzuki Darusman*

Summary

The Special Rapporteur shares his initial thoughts about the direction he intends to take in fulfilling his mandate, building on the findings and recommendations of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He stresses the international law implications of the commission's findings and the responsibility of the international community to protect.

The Special Rapporteur also highlights the responses by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including some opportunities for engagement presented by the Government's latest position on the recommendations made at the universal periodic review. He also discusses the qualitative differences in responses required of the Member States, neighbouring States and other States concerned, and the United Nations system, involving also the realignment and strengthening of civil society work and people-to-people contacts.

* Late submission.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is the first to be submitted by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the Human Rights Council since the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea completed its work in March 2014.

2. In its resolution 22/13, the Human Rights Council decided to establish the commission of inquiry for a period of one year to investigate the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It also extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a period of one year, and designated him to be one of the three commissioners. The commission presented its final report to the Council at its twenty-fifth session.[1] The Special Rapporteur, in a note,[2] informed the Council that he would submit his regular report to the Council at its twenty-sixth session in order to take into account the follow-up and subsequent developments after the commission had completed its mandate.

3. The Special Rapporteur prepared the present report in the wake of resolution 25/25 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea adopted by an overwhelming majority by the Human Rights Council on 28 March 2014. In the resolution, adopted by a recorded vote of 30 in favour, 6 against and 11 abstentions, the Council called upon all parties concerned, including United Nations bodies, to consider implementation of the recommendations made by the commission of inquiry in its report in order to address the dire human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It also requested the Special Rapporteur to submit regular reports to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly on the implementation of his mandate, including on the follow-up efforts made in the implementation of the recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

4. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur shares his initial thoughts about the direction he intends to take in fulfilling his mandate, building on the findings and recommendations of the commission of inquiry. In this sense, the report is not a regular update of the situation of human rights as such, but rather indicates the way forward. The Special Rapporteur firmly believes that the work of the commission has turned a page in decades-long efforts to address the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and provided a unique opportunity for the international community to help to make a difference in the lives of its people, including the victims aboard. There is no turning back; it cannot be "business as usual" as the international community presses on to ease the ongoing suffering of the people and to ensure accountability, justice and reconciliation.

5. The Special Rapporteur believes that any discussion about the report submitted by the commission of inquiry would be incomplete without paying tribute to the victims who have survived and courageously spoken up about unspeakable atrocities, and bearing in mind those who are still suffering, and the beleaguered population of 20 million who may still fall victim to the widespread human rights violations that affect every aspect of daily life in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In many ways, the commission's report was a report of the victims and their courage to bear witness, to give voice to those who have perished or have not been able to tell their story.

[1] A/HRC/25/63.
[2] A/HRC/25/62.

II. A new phase of work

6. The work performed by the commission of inquiry should be seen as the beginning of a process, not the end. The Special Rapporteur considers that the post-commission era presents a new phase for the human rights of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the many victims from other countries, and requires a decisive change in the approach going forward. For more than 50 years, the question of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has always been regarded as a political issue within the United Nations, as shaped by its States Members, and addressed in a political manner. This would reflect and fluctuate in accordance with the international political situation. What has now happened with the report of the commission is that the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been decisively placed on the track of international law. This is not to say that the issue has been completely moved away from the political arena, where its security dimension remains of great concern; the commission's report has, however, demonstrated the linkage between the internal situation with regard to the almost total denial of human rights and the security dimensions which, from time to time, manifest themselves in terms of aggressive behaviour by the State. With the commission's findings, these political and security issues can only be settled or closed if these human rights violations are dealt with in a decisive manner. The commission clearly stated that it had reasonable grounds to conclude that crimes against humanity continue and that they have been taking place for decades. A core element in moving forward therefore is to pursue this matter from the perspective of international criminal justice and human rights law.

7. The phase is also new in several other important aspects. The first concerns the revelation of the truth. The second has to do with how the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea handles this revelation, as much as the heightened international scrutiny of its situation of human rights. The third focuses on the qualitative differences in responses that are required of Member States, neighbouring States and other States concerned, the United Nations system and its relevant bodies, other stakeholders and the international community as a whole. This will also require a realignment of and strengthening in the work of civil society and people-to-people contacts. The Special Rapporteur believes that all these aspects are interrelated and changes in one will inevitably affect those in another.

III. Revelation of the truth

8. One of the most striking observations that the Special Rapporteur has made throughout his mandate and during his work with the commission of inquiry is that, for so many years, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was able to conceal the true magnitude and gravity of its atrocities against its own people. In the past decade, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council (and the Commission on Human Rights before 2006) adopted resolutions every year in which they expressed their deepest concern at the systematic, widespread and grave violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Year after year, the Government rejected those resolutions, denied such violations and refused to grant access to the international community to verify the situation.

9. In his report submitted to the Human Rights Council in 2013,[3] in which the Special Rapporteur made a comprehensive review of more than 60 United Nations reports and resolutions on the situation of human rights in Democratic People's Republic of Korea

[3] A/HRC/22/57.

since 2004, he stated clearly that this status quo could not be allowed to continue in the face of such violations, such international condemnation and such non-cooperation. The establishment of the commission of inquiry, and its subsequent findings and recommendations, must also be seen in this context. It was the much-needed breakthrough that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, civil society and the Special Rapporteur himself had called for when they advocated for an international inquiry mechanism to investigate and more fully document the grave, systematic and widespread violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a step towards accountability.

A. Crimes against humanity

10. The commission of inquiry found that crimes against humanity had been and continued to be committed by the institutions and officials of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State. These were not mere excesses of the State, but essential components of its political system. The gravity, scale and nature of these violations revealed a State that has no parallel in the contemporary world. The State strategically uses surveillance, coercion, fear and punishment to preclude the expression of any dissent. It uses executions and enforced disappearance to political prison camps to terrorize the population into submission. The State's violence has been externalized through State-sponsored abductions and enforced disappearances of people from other nations. These international enforced disappearances are unique in their intensity, scale and nature.[4]

11. Anyone in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea who is considered a threat to the political system and the leadership can become a target of these crimes against humanity. The primary victims included the estimated 80,000 to 120,000 inmates of the political prison camps; the inmates of the ordinary prison system, including the political prisoners among them; Christian and other religious believers, as well as others considered to introduce subversive influences; persons who try to flee the country, including persons forcibly repatriated by China; starving populations, and persons from Japan, the Republic of Korea and other countries who were abducted or denied repatriation, and became victims of international abductions and enforced disappearances.[5] The ongoing plight of the prisoners held incommunicado in the political prison camps, whose existence the Government continues to deny, is cause for deep concern. The Special Rapporteur stresses that these camps must be shut down and that the prisoners must be released without delay.

12. Since the commission of inquiry released its report, the Special Rapporteur has been asked repeatedly about which of the commission's findings could be considered "new", given the previous documentation by civil society actors and the United Nations. It is a valid question. The Special Rapporteur believes that the answer explains why the revelation of the truth by the commission has been so powerful.

13. Firstly, the findings are the result of an intensive, systematic and transparent investigation that began with an open call for submissions by any party with information and documentation on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea itself, neighbouring States and other States concerned, State and non-State actors, civil society and individuals all had ample

[4] A/HRC/25/63, paras. 80 and 83.

[5] Ibid., paras. 67, 72 and 79. See also the report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (available from www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIDPRK/Pages/ReportoftheCommissionofInquiryDPRK.aspx), paras. 1024, 1160-1163.

opportunity to provide information throughout the process. Regrettably, the commission received no cooperation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and had no access to the country, despite having made numerous efforts to contact the Government. Some sceptics have sought to discredit the process followed by the commission, claiming that its findings were based solely on information provided by defectors; the Special Rapporteur, however, draws their attention to the fact that, in addition to the 80 victims and other witnesses who testified through public hearings and the more than 240 confidential interviews conducted, the commission also reviewed satellite images, internal documents brought out of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as videos, photographs and written materials, including 80 submissions from various sources. The patterns of violations documented by the commission in its report were based on first-hand testimony from multiple witnesses, and corroborated by other information.

14. Investigating the nine patterns of violations identified by the Special Rapporteur in his report submitted in 2013,[6] the commission of inquiry categorized the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations that had been and continued to be committed into six categories: arbitrary detention, torture, executions and enforced disappearance to political prison camps; violations of the freedoms of thought, expression and religion; discrimination on the basis of State-assigned social class, gender, and disability; violations of the freedom of movement and residence, including the right to leave one's own country; violations of the right to food and related aspects of the right to life; and enforced disappearance of persons from other countries, including through international abductions.

15. It was on the basis of this body of testimony and other information received concerning each of these patterns of violations that the commission determined that its findings constituted reasonable grounds to conclude that crimes against humanity had been committed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea so as to merit a criminal investigation by a competent national or international organ of justice.[7] It found that these crimes against humanity entailed extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation. The commission further found that crimes against humanity were ongoing in the State "because the policies, institutions and patterns of impunity that lie at their heart remain in place".[8]

B. Following the track of international law

16. The Special Rapporteur cannot emphasize enough the significance of the international law implications of the revelation of the truth achieved by the commission of inquiry. For the first time ever, an investigation mandated by the highest inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for human rights, namely, the Human Rights Council, documented and concluded that a number of long-standing and ongoing patterns of systematic and widespread violations in Democratic People's Republic of Korea met the high threshold required for proof of crimes against humanity in international law.[9] The perpetrators enjoy impunity because they act in accordance with State policy. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is unwilling to implement its international obligation to prosecute and bring the perpetrators to justice.

[6] A/HRC/22/57.
[7] Ibid., para. 74.
[8] Ibid., para. 76.
[9] Ibid., para. 85.

17. The main perpetrators, as documented by the commission of inquiry, include officials of the State Security Department, the Ministry of People's Security, the Korean People's Army, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the judiciary and the Workers' Party of Korea, who are acting under the effective control of the central organs of the Workers' Party of Korea, the National Defence Commission and the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.[10]

18. The findings of the commission of inquiry, which indicated that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a State Member of the United Nations, has committed crimes against humanity over a span of several decades, raised questions regarding the accountability of the international community. The commission recalled that the leaders gathered at the 2005 World Summit of Heads of State and Governments had reaffirmed that each individual State had the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and that, in addition, world leaders had pledged to uphold the complementary responsibility to protect held by the international community.[11] The commission also found that, in the light of the manifest failure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to protect its population from crimes against humanity, the international community, through the United Nations, bears the responsibility to protect the population of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from crimes against humanity using, first and foremost, appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means. The responsibility of the international community was further warranted by the fact that the crimes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea against humanity have an impact on many persons from other States, who were systematically abducted and who continued to suffer enforced disappearance, along with the families that they had left behind. In a number of these cases, the abductions involved blatant violations of the territorial sovereignty of other States.[12]

19. The international community must set in train immediate, impartial and just action to secure accountability, fulfil the responsibility to protect, put human rights first and stop grave human rights violations, in accordance with international law.

C. Contextual factors affecting justice and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula

20. The Special Rapporteur draws particular attention to one of the main findings of the commission of inquiry that has, however, generated less discussion than it deserves: the historical and political context of human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The commission emphasized that the current situation of human rights in that country had been shaped by the historical experiences of the Korean people. Confucian social structures and the experience of the Japanese colonial occupation had to some degree informed the political structures and attitudes prevailing in the country today. The division imposed on the Korean peninsula, the massive destruction caused by the Korean War and the impact of the Cold War had engendered "an isolationist mindset and an aversion to outside powers that are used to justify internal repression".[13]

21. The Special Rapporteur believes that genuine recognition of this historical and political context is essential for the international community if it is to address meaningfully the situation human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Among its recommendations, the commission made stated clearly that the international

[10] Ibid., para. 24.
[11] Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry (see footnote 5), para. 1024.
[12] Ibid., para. 1025.
[13] A/HRC/25/63, para. 25.

community had to accept its responsibility to protect the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from crimes against humanity, because the Government had manifestly failed to do so. In particular, this responsibility had be accepted in the light of the role played by the international community (and by the great powers in particular) in the division of the Korean peninsula and because of the unresolved legacy of the Korean War. These unfortunate legacies helped not only to explain the intractability of the situation of human rights but also why an effective response was imperative.[14]

22. In a press statement issued on 15 November 2013, upon concluding an official visit to the Republic of Korea in November 2013,[15] the Special Rapporteur stressed the need to look at issues related to human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with a perspective paving the way for justice and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. In the light of the findings of the commission of inquiry, the Special Rapporteur reiterates that the primary responsibility for the human rights of the people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea lies with the Government. The international community must address the Government's failure to do so and ensure accountability. Meanwhile, the international community cannot shy away from external factors, such as security concerns, inter-Korean relations and the regional dynamics around the peninsula and beyond, that also affect the considerations and the severely restrictive policies of the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Unless these factors are taken into account, there will be no meaningful steps towards a settlement of the Korean question, which has a direct bearing on the human rights of the people on the Korean peninsula.

IV. Responses of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

23. By providing a more holistic picture of the wide-ranging and gross human rights violations committed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the findings of the commission of inquiry put an end to the decades-long cover-up of the true magnitude and gravity of the State's atrocities against its own people. Now, not only does the world but also the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea know that the truth has been revealed, and that it is under increased scrutiny. This is powerful and can act as both a deterrent and an incentive to change course. This is one of the many reasons why the Special Rapporteur believes that change is possible.

24. Although the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has categorically rejected the commission of inquiry, the Special Rapporteur has observed some indication that it has been responding to the revelations; for instance, family reunions in the Korean Peninsula resumed in February 2014 for the first time since 2010.[16] The announcement came earlier and preparations were under way, while the reunions were held shortly after the commission made its report public on 17 February 2014. A few days before the commission presented its report to the Human Rights Council and engaged in an interactive dialogue with the Council on its findings and recommendations on 17 March 2014, the Yokota family from Japan, after years of anguish since the abduction of their 13-year-old daughter Megumi in 1977, was able to meet and spend some time in Mongolia with their granddaughter and great granddaughter, who were born in Democratic People's Republic of Korea.[17] Some might see these as coincidences. The Special Rapporteur believes that the

[14] Ibid., para. 86.

[15] Available at www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13993&LangID=E.

[16] "Tearful Korean reunions begin, first since 2010", Associated Press, 20 February 2014, available at http://bigstory.ap.org/article/koreas-begin-reunions-separated-families.

[17] "Meeting with abductee's daughter could propel Tokyo-Pyongyang talks", *Asahi Shimbun*, 17 March 2014, available at http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201403170078.

revelation of the truth, international scrutiny and sustained pressure have had some initial effects and will continue to do so.

A. Universal periodic review

25. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has always maintained its procedural objection to any country-specific mandate, citing this as the reason for which it refuses to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. The State has nonetheless been willing to engage in the universal periodic review mechanism, which examines the situation of human rights in all States Members of the United Nations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea participated in its first review in December 2009 and rejected 50 recommendations immediately afterwards. For more than four years thereafter, it failed to identify any recommendations that enjoyed its support or to report on any progress of their implementation.[18] The General Assembly also, in its resolution 65/225, adopted at the end of 2010, expressed its serious concern at the refusal of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to articulate the recommendations that enjoyed its support following its review, and regretted the lack of actions taken to implement the recommendations contained in the final outcome. Despite similar concerns expressed by other parties, for three more years the Government maintained its ambiguous stance on the recommendations. It was only after the presentation of the commission's findings before the Human Rights Council that the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made any positive progress with regard to the universal periodic review.

26. The second review of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was held on 1 May 2014. A few days before the review, the Government indicated that its position was that the State accepted 81 of the 167 recommendations made during the first cycle of the universal periodic review in December 2009.[19] The Special Rapporteur notes the Government described the 81 accepted recommendations as "recommendations that are implemented or currently under implementation". These recommendations mostly related to economic and social rights, women, children, a rights-based approach to development, and the reunion of separated families in the Korean peninsula. They also included some civil and political rights, which the Government claimed were being implemented. Notably, the Government also accepted recommendations to submit reports to the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. One of the recommendations accepted specifically called upon the Government to take measures to facilitate family reunification, as recommended by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.[20] Although belated, these are welcome developments. The Special Rapporteur will continue to seek to engage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to ensure the implementation of the above recommendations, and encourages other Member States to do likewise.

27. The Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review adopted the second review of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 May 2014. In its immediate response to the second review, the Government rejected 83 of the 268 recommendations made; for the others, the Government would provide responses in due time, but no later than the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council".[21] If this were indeed to eventuate, it would mark a significant improvement in the Government's cooperation with the universal periodic review mechanism.

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[18] A/HRC/13/13.

[19] See annex I on the website of the Office of the High Commissioner at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/KPSession19.aspx.

[20] A/HRC/13/13, para. 90, recommendation 78.

[21] See A/HRC/27/10.

28. The Special Rapporteur urges Member States and all parties concerned, including the United Nations system and civil society, to seize the opportunities for engagement that the latest developments in the universal periodic review have created. Firstly, the international community must not take the recommendations accepted during the first review at face value. Whether bilaterally or through regional and international platforms, efforts must be made to ensure that the recommendations are implemented and that they bring about a genuine improvement in the daily life and human rights of the people. Secondly, the international community must encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to accept and implement more recommendations from the second review in a timely manner, in any case no later than the twenty-seventh session, in September 2014, when the Council is scheduled to adopt the report of the Working Group, and to commit to reporting on the progress of their implementation.

B. Opportunities for engagement

29. In order to facilitate the above-mentioned process, the Special Rapporteur summarizes below the recommendations accepted by the State under review,[22] which represent an opportunity for engagement, in particular those recommendations that are concrete and the implementation of which is verifiable.

1. Cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms

30. With regard to the scope of international obligations and the State's cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has indicated that the recommendation that it fully comply with the principles and rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two international covenants, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which it is party (recommendation 3) had been implemented or was currently being implemented. It would also consider and envisage acceding to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (recommendations 2 and 18) and improve its cooperation with United Nations treaty bodies by agreeing on timelines for submitting overdue reports, in particular to the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (recommendation 41). It would also pursue cooperation with the thematic procedures of the Human Rights Council (recommendation 54).

2. Violence against women: rights of vulnerable groups

31. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea indicated that it had accepted several concrete recommendations that it combat violence against women, protect the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly, and provide for the most vulnerable groups (recommendations 17, 19, 20, 38, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 64, 66, 67, 86, 87, 96, 98 and 99); for example that it pass legislation specifically dealing with violence against women, including domestic violence, providing for prosecution of individuals committing acts of violence against women (recommendation 19); increase the number of women in management posts and in decision-making processes (recommendation 20); ensure that the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities are more effectively realized through the implementation of a number of specific national strategies (recommendation 38); provide all children with equal opportunities to study and give them access to higher education based on their talent and individual capability (recommendation 60); and give

[22] See A/HRC/13/13, para. 90.

priority to vulnerable groups in the distribution of international assistance (recommendation 61).

32. Several of the recommendations accepted by the State concern protection issues and raising public awareness, with particular reference to victims of trafficking in persons, for example, that it establish a government task force to create protection programmes, provide resources for recovery and promote prevention through education and media campaigns (recommendation 27); step up measures to address comprehensively the problem of trafficking and violence against women, including by increasing public awareness campaigns (recommendation 69); and strengthen measures, including through international dialogue and cooperation, to combat human trafficking and provide appropriate assistance to victims of trafficking (recommendation 68). The Special Rapporteur believes, however, that such measures should be calibrated carefully to avoid restricting freedom of movement and the right to leave the country.

3. Structural reforms: the rights to food, health and education

33. Recommendations concerning the rights to food, health, education, water economic and social rights in general, humanitarian cooperation, and development also featured prominently among those accepted (recommendations 30-36, 60, 88-94, 96, 97, 99, 100-105, 109, 112-115 and 117). They included recommendations concerning the implementation of a national plan of action of education for all with a view to improving the quality of the system of 11 years of compulsory, free, universal education, increasing progressively the necessary resources allocated for this purpose (recommendation 30); securing the right to food for all citizens, in particular in order to secure the right to health for children (recommendation 90); taking the steps necessary to ensure impartial access to adequate food, drinking water and other basic necessities for all people within the State's jurisdiction, including vulnerable groups (recommendation 92); and strengthening cooperation with the United Nations and its mechanisms on human rights and humanitarian matters with a view to building national capacities and improving the people's well-being (recommendation 114). In particular, the Government also indicated that it had accepted the recommendation that the State continue efforts to reinvigorate the national economy by, inter alia, allowing more freedom for people to engage in economic and commercial activities (recommendation 88).

34. On structural reforms and the allocation of resources, the Government indicated that it had accepted recommendations to invest sufficient resources to promote and protect the principle of equality in the fields of work, education and health (recommendation 59); to allocate resources equitably and to implement food security policies, including through sustainable agricultural practices and reduced State restrictions on the cultivation and trade of foodstuffs (recommendation 94); to increase resources allocated to the education sector for better quality of education, and to encourage the authorities to continue their efforts in this area (recommendation 103); and to work on overcoming the obstacles related to economic problems and the scarcity of resources through cooperation with the international community and the United Nations so as to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights (recommendation 115). The Special Rapporteur is keen to see these commitments translated into a real readjustment of the State's *songbun* military first policy, which prioritizes militarization in the allocation of limited resources.

4. Family reunions

35. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea also indicated that it had accepted to guarantee separated families' fundamental right to know the fate of their family members across the border and to communicate and regularly meet together; do everything possible, in cooperation with the Republic of Korea, to ensure that the maximum number of meetings of separated families is organized, take concrete steps to continue the process of family

reunification, "because for the elder generation even a delay of one or two years means that their chance of seeing their relatives may be lost forever"; and adopt measures to facilitate family reunification, as recommended by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (recommendations 75-78). Of the relevant recommendations made by the current mandate holder and the previous one over the years, the Special Rapporteur draws special attention to the recommendation that family reunions become a sustained process moving beyond short-term meetings to life-long reunification,[23] and looks forward its concrete implementation.

5. Freedoms, treatment of persons under detention, and accountability

36. The Special Rapporteur is seriously concerned at the number of recommendations relating to freedoms, fair trial, the treatment of persons in detention and the accountability of those committing human rights abuses that the Government indicated as accepted and already implemented or currently being implemented. These recommendations included that the State continue to prevent and to punish human rights abuses by law enforcement officials (recommendation 61); give all in detention a fair trial (recommendation 72); train professionals involved in the judicial system on the relevant international standards on a fair trial and rule of law (recommendation 73); ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human being (recommendation 74); allow the exercise of the right to the freedom of expression and the freedom of association and assembly by fostering and facilitating civil society entities and enabling them to obtain status under law (recommendation 79); and take further steps to support freedom of expression and the right to freedom of movement (recommendation 84). The Special Rapporteur is seriously concerned because the claim by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that the recommendations were already implemented or currently being implemented contrasts starkly with the findings documented by the commission of inquiry and the information received by the Special Rapporteur.

37. At its second periodic review, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea asserted that political prison camps did not exist and were a "complete fabrication"; furthermore, persons sentenced to the penalty of reform through labour under the country's Criminal Law served their terms in reform institutions.[24] On a number of freedoms widely documented as being seriously curtailed, the Government claimed that the Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also guaranteed freedom of religion, and that the State respected religious life and ceremonies of religious people and ensured the freedom to set up churches and other religious buildings.[25] Freedom to travel was fully guaranteed by both the Constitution and the law; persons in the country could travel abroad after complying with the necessary formalities. People were furthermore free to travel anywhere within the country, "with the exception of the frontlines and areas with military installations where one can travel after obtaining permission",[26] while freedom of expression was "a fundamental human right protected by law". The people in the country were able to freely express their views through radios, newspapers and magazines; any violation of these rights was subject to legal punishment.[27]

38. The above responses given by the Government reflect total denial of the actual situation; similarly, its blatant denial of the systematic human rights violations and the

[23] A/HRC/13/47, para. 74 (c).
[24] A/HRC/27/10, para. 60.
[25] Ibid., para. 61.
[26] Ibid., para. 62.
[27] Ibid., para. 63.

numerous cases of international abduction and enforced disappearances,[28] as documented by the commission of inquiry in its report, is totally unacceptable. If accepted at face value, this conduct, despite the consistent and credible evidence gathered also by other mechanisms of the Human Rights Council itself, could seriously undermine the whole universal periodic review process with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, running counter to the principles that the review be a cooperative mechanism, based on objective and reliable information and on dialogue, thus undermining its objective of improving the situation of human rights on the ground. This should also be food for thought for those Member States that did not support the commission of inquiry or Human Rights Council resolution 25/25 by arguing that the universal periodic review mechanism rather than a country-specific initiative would be preferable to address the situation.

V. The way forward: the responses required of all parties concerned

39. **In its resolution 25/25, the Human Rights Council called upon all parties concerned, including United Nations bodies, to consider implementation of the recommendations made by the commission of inquiry in its report in order to address the dire human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Special Rapporteur interprets "all parties concerned" as all-encompassing; this includes Member States, the United Nations system and its relevant bodies, neighbouring States and other States concerned, relevant international, regional and national bodies, civil society, individuals, the international community as a whole, and possibly other stakeholders.**

40. **Unlike in the previous two years, when the Human Rights Council adopted its annual resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (resolution 19/13 in 2012 and resolution 22/13 in 2013) without a vote, resolution 25/25 was adopted by a vote, requested by Cuba; the result was 30 votes in favour (Argentina, Austria, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sierra Leone, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America), 6 against (China, Cuba, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam), with 11 abstentions (Algeria, Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kuwait, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa). The position of each of the 47 States Members of the Council has been recorded and is a matter of public and historical record. The Special Rapporteur observes that both during the interactive dialogue with the commission of inquiry and when the resolution was adopted on 28 March 2014, none, with the exception of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, denied that the dire human rights situation had to be addressed. Of the countries that did not join the majority of 30 members voting in favour of the resolution, most – if not all – cited procedural reasons or differences in approach. They reiterated their reservations about country-specific mandates, and expressed preference for other mechanisms, in particular the universal periodic review, and urged engagement, dialogue and cooperation. The Special Rapporteur stresses that different mechanisms exist for good reasons, and that they are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, ultimately they serve and share the common goal to better promote and protect human rights for all.**

[28] Ibid., paras. 122 and 119.

A. Genuine results to ease suffering on the ground

41. **The Special Rapporteur urges all concerned parties, and in particular the Member States that support the universal periodic review, to seize the opportunity provided by the 81 recommendations that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accepted voluntarily at its first review. In the face of the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations documented by the commission of inquiry, no responsible member of the international community should be allowed to hide behind a procedural difference and idly stand by. It is therefore important to show that the universal periodic review process can yield result, not just on paper but in action. Many of the recommendations made at the second review overlap or build upon the 81 recommendations accepted by the State under review. In the time remaining before the twenty-seventh session of Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur calls upon all Member States to engage with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to accept and agree on concrete steps for implementation.**

42. **In the above context, the Special Rapporteur draws special attention to the immediate steps that the Human Rights Council, in its resolution 25/25, urged the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take:**

(a) To ensure the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as the rights to freedom of opinion, expression and association, including by permitting the establishment of independent newspapers and other media;

(b) To end discrimination against citizens, including State-sponsored discrimination based on the *songbun* system, and to take immediate steps to ensure gender equality and to protect women from gender-based violence;

(c) To ensure the right to freedom of movement, including the freedom to choose one's place of residence and employment;

(d) To promote equal access to food, including through full transparency regarding the provision of humanitarian assistance, so that such assistance is genuinely provided to vulnerable persons;

(e) To immediately halt all human right violations relating to prison camps, including the practice of forced labour, to dismantle all political prison camps and release all political prisoners, and to ensure that justice sector reforms provide protections for a fair trial and due process;

(f) To allow all persons who have been abducted or otherwise forcibly disappeared, as well as their descendants, to return immediately to their countries of origin.

43. **Most of the above steps are similar to the substance of the universal periodic review recommendations acceptance by the State under review. The Government may choose to call those detained as reformed "through labour", serving their terms in "reform institutions",[29] and deny the existence of political prison camps. Names aside, the same principles apply. The Government, through the universal periodic review mechanism, accepted to give all in detention a fair trial and to treat all persons deprived of their liberty with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human being. There is no reason why the Government should not be asked to demonstrate that it meant what it said. The Special Rapporteur encourages Member States to follow up the recommendation made by the commission of inquiry to form a human rights contact group to raise concerns about the situation of human rights in**

[29] Ibid., para. 60.

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to provide support for initiatives to improve it, fully utilizing all available mechanisms to achieve tangible results.

B. Key elements of a strategy to address international abductions and enforced disappearances

44. The Special Rapporteur would like to share a few observations and suggestions about the way forward with the neighbouring States and other States concerned, firstly on the issue of international abductions and enforced disappearances. The commission of inquiry recommended that the Special Rapporteur develop a strategy, involving all concerned United Nations human rights mechanisms, to address the issue of international abduction, enforced disappearances and related matters coherently and without delay. It also recommended that Member States afford full cooperation to ensure the implementation of such a strategy. The Special Rapporteur stresses that this issue, and the strategy being developed, is of upmost importance and will always be an integral part of the follow-up work in the way forward. The gravity of the commission's findings and the clarity it has given to the issue of international abductions and enforced disappearances have energized all concerned as a strategy is being developed to address this important issue.

45. The commission of inquiry found that, since 1950, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has engaged in the systematic abduction, denial of repatriation and subsequent enforced disappearance of persons from other countries on a large scale and as a matter of State policy. Well over 200,000 persons, including children, have been taken from other countries to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and many were never heard of again. This figure includes those who left for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the context of the Korean War.[30] They may have potentially become victims of enforced disappearance.

46. During his visit to Japan from 8 to 10 April 2014, as an immediate follow-up to the work of the commission of inquiry, the Special Rapporteur was informed by the authorities that, in addition to the 19 Japanese persons who had been confirmed victims of abduction by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, there were currently 860 missing persons who could not be ruled out as have been abducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In addition to holding discussions with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Abduction Issues and other relevant authorities, for the first time in his visit as the mandate holder, the families of victims of abduction and a wide range of civil society actors met with him together to share information and discuss the way forward. The Special Rapporteur was deeply encouraged by the sense of unity and commitment to seeking closure to this issue.

1. An international approach

47. One of the key elements of the strategy developed by the Special Rapporteur is the international perspective and approach required to address the issue of international abductions and enforced disappearances. This is no longer only a bilateral issue between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but one that concerns other countries and the international community at large.

48. The commission of inquiry found that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had used its land, naval and intelligence forces to conduct abductions and arrests. Operations were approved at the level of the Supreme Leader. The vast

[30] Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry (see footnote 5), para. 1011.

majority of victims were forcibly disappeared to gain labour and other skills for the State. Some victims were used to further espionage and terrorist activities. Women abducted from Europe, the Middle East and Asia were subjected to forced marriages with men from other countries to prevent liaisons on their part with ethnic Korean women that could result in interracial children. Some of the abducted women had also been subject to sexual exploitation.[31] Furthermore, ethnic Koreans from the Republic of Korea and Japan, forcibly disappeared by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, had been discriminated against for their origins and background, categorized as "hostile" and forced to work in mines and farms in remote marginalized areas of the country.[32] Since the 1990s, agents of the State had abducted a number of persons from Chinese territory, including nationals of China, the Republic of Korea and, in at least one case, a former Japanese national.[33] In addition to victims from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, nationals of Lebanon, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Romania, and possibly others,[34] were among the cases of international abduction and enforced disappearances recorded by the commission.[35] The Special Rapporteur will be contacting these States to seek further information and to engage them in follow-up actions on behalf of their missing citizens.

2. Engagement of civil society and contact with local communities

49. If the new strategy currently being developed is to succeed in addressing the issue of international abductions and enforced disappearances, the international community must work together. All Governments concerned, families, civil society and relevant United Nations mechanisms should engage strategically in this new phase of work. In addition, the strategy must also involve the general public, in particular in the countries concerned, so that communities in different locations may be informed and hence empowered to share available information with the international mechanisms. The Special Rapporteur is pleased to note that Human Rights Council, in its resolution 25/25, specifically requested sustained communications, advocacy and outreach initiatives to maintain visibility of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He plans to use this new communications capacity as he pursues a strategy, involving all concerned United Nations human rights mechanisms, to address the issue of international abduction, enforced disappearances and related matters coherently and without delay. He stresses that, in addition to the official languages of the United Nations, outreach should be conducted in relevant languages, in particular Korean and Japanese, so that the general public in the countries concerned may be effectively reached, and results achieved.

3. Closure and accountability

50. The Special Rapporteur is seriously concerned at the continued denial by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, during its second universal periodic review, of the scale of the issue of international abduction and enforced disappearances, as well as the need to bring closure and ensure accountability, claiming that no citizens of any countries other than Japan had been abducted. The delegation added that the issue had been completely resolved as a result of the efforts made by the Democratic

[31] A/HRC/25/63, para. 67.

[32] Ibid., para. 69.

[33] Ibid., para. 72.

[34] The commission of inquiry considered it possible that other foreigners, especially foreign women, from France, Italy, the Netherlands and other unspecified European countries and the Middle East were among the abductees; see the report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry (see footnote 5), para. 975.

[35] Ibid., paras. 966-969, 971-972 and 995.

People's Republic of Korea "in faithful compliance with the DPRK-Japan Pyongyang Declaration published in September 2002",[36] and that the issue of prisoners of war had been settled in accordance with the Armistice Agreement, while the issue of the "abduction of south Koreans" did not exist.[37] Such blatant denial of the facts in the face of the systematic violations and numerous cases documented by the commission of inquiry cannot be left unchallenged. The Special Rapporteur stresses the gravity of the commission's findings and the clarity that it has given to the issue of international abductions and enforced disappearances have energized all concerned to work together, bring closure to victims' families and loved ones, and ensure accountability.

C. Neighbouring States and other States concerned

51. On the issue of refoulement, the commission of inquiry recommended that China and other States should respect the principle of non-refoulement and, accordingly, abstain from forcibly repatriating any persons to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.[38] The Special Rapporteur reiterates his call upon all countries where persons from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have sought refuge or are transiting to protect such persons, to treat them humanely and to adhere to the principle of non-refoulement.

52. With regard to the role of China and the possible ways forward, the Special Rapporteur draws attention to a number of pertinent issues and observes that China is in a challenging and an unenviable situation. Most of the nationals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea who manage to flee the country cross the border with China, and will continue to do so. The current handling of the movement of people across the borders is far from ideal, can easily lead to abuses and is not at all sustainable. The Special Rapporteur makes himself available to engage in a constructive dialogue with China to help find a way forward. The current situation harms all concerned, including the people of China, and must not continue. In addition, many women are trafficked by force or deception from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea into China for the purposes of exploitation. The commission of inquiry found that an estimated 20,000 children born to women from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were currently in China, without proper access to education, and health care, and nationality and birth registration.[39] The Special Rapporteur remains deeply disturbed by the widespread practice of infanticide and the murder of half-Chinese children in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as revealed by the investigation conducted by the commission of inquiry,[40] corroborated by several witnesses as well as in the latest universal periodic review documentation concerning the treatment of minorities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.[41] This, too, must be stopped.

53. The Special Rapporteur points out that the cooperation of China is a key factor in bringing meaningful change to the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This applies to the people-to-people and other forms of contact and information flow above and beyond those at the official level. Strengthened market forces and advances in information technology have, for

[36] A/HRC/27/10, para. 119.
[37] Ibid., para. 95.
[38] A/HRC/25/63, para. 90 (a).
[39] Ibid., para. 44.
[40] Ibid., para. 90 (f); see also the report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry (see footnote 5), paras. 424-435.
[41] A/HRC/WG.6/19/PRK/3.

example, allowed citizens of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea greater access to information from outside the country. Outside information, notably from and through China, is increasingly finding its way into the country. The Special Rapporteur values the cooperation of China and is determined to assist it in addressing the consequences of the dire situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

54. The Special Rapporteur was able to gain an insight into the issues and factors that have an impact on inter-Korean relations during his fact-finding mission to the Republic of Korea in November 2011.[42] Such issues can affect a wide range of human rights, such as the reunification of the thousands of separated families on the Korean peninsula. He encourages the two Governments to disconnect the issue of family reunions from any political or other consideration, such as the provision of humanitarian aid. The reunions must be regular, frequent and inclusive, and become part of a sustained process moving beyond short-term meetings to life-long reunification. During his visit, the Special Rapporteur was informed by relevant authorities that an interministerial structure had been set up to coordinate and handle various aspects of issues relating to refugees from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This is a welcome move, given that those seeking to leave the country are at risk of trafficking and exploitation, while many may also have long-term rehabilitation needs and whose full integration into society upon their arrival in the Republic of Korea should be facilitated.[43]

55. As the international community and all parties concerned embark on this new phase of work for human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Special Rapporteur encourages the various political parties in the Republic of Korea to make a concerted effort to provide the much-needed focus, energy and sense of direction for the Korean people to foster dialogue and shape the future of inter-Korea relations on the basis of justice and reconciliation through respect for human rights, while in the meantime helping to ease the ongoing suffering of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

D. United Nations system

56. The commission of inquiry pointed out the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a State Member of the United Nations, had for decades pursued policies involving crimes that shock the conscience of humanity raised questions about the inadequacy of the response of the international community.[44] The commission therefore made a number of recommendations addressed to the international community and the United Nations.

57. The Security Council has a key role in ensuring accountability of those responsible for crimes against humanity committed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the victims aboard. The three members of the commission of inquiry, at the invitation of Australia, France and the United States of America, briefed the members of the Security Council under the Arria formula on 17 April

[42] See "DPRK: UN expert calls for justice and reconciliation through respect for human rights", 15 November 2013, available from www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13993&LangID=E.

[43] According to the Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, a total of 1,514 individuals from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea arrived in the Republic of Korea in 2013. In the first three months of 2014, the number of arrivals was 361.

[44] A/HRC/25/63, para. 86.

2014. Of the 13 members present,[45] the 11 members who spoke all suggested, to various degrees, that the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea be formally incorporated into the Council's agenda. Several also called for regular briefings on the situation by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur. Six of the 11 members explicitly called for a referral of the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the International Criminal Court for action in accordance with that court's jurisdiction, as recommended by the commission of inquiry.[46] The other five indicated that it was incumbent upon the Security Council to consider the matter and referral to the International Criminal Court. The report of the commission has been circulated as a Security Council document (S/2014/276).

58. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 25/25, recommended that the General Assembly submit the report of the commission of inquiry to the Security Council for its consideration and appropriate action in order that those responsible for human rights violations, including those that may amount to crimes against humanity, were held to account, including through consideration of referral of the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the appropriate international criminal justice mechanism, and consideration of the scope for effective targeted sanctions against those who appear to be most responsible for crimes against humanity, taking into account the relevant conclusions and recommendations of the commission of inquiry. The commission briefed and discussed its findings and recommendations at a side event to the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly on 16 April 2014. In the past two years, the Assembly has adopted its annual resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea without a vote. In its resolution 68/183, the Assembly requested the Special Rapporteur to continue to report his findings and recommendations, as well as to report on the outcome of and follow-up to the work of the commission of inquiry, in line with any decisions of the Human Rights Council at its twenty-fifth session. The Special Rapporteur will further update the Assembly in his report to be submitted to the Assembly later in 2014. In the light of the grave findings and recommendations of the commission of inquiry, the Assembly should, possibly in its relevant resolution on the State at its next session, send an unequivocal signal that the international community is prepared to take the follow-up to the work of the commission and Human Rights Council resolution 25/25 to a new level.

59. In its resolution 68/183, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the situation the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 25/25, requested the Office of the High Commissioner to report on its follow-up efforts in the regular annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, effective as of the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly.

60. In the light of the above, the commission of inquiry, in its report, recommended that the United Nations Secretariat and agencies should urgently adopt and implement a common "Rights up Front" strategy to ensure that all engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea effectively takes into account, and addresses, human rights concerns.[47] The Special Rapporteur is encouraged that, in his meeting with the three members of the commission in April 2014, the Secretary-General expressed his commitment to follow up on the commission's

[45] China and the Russian Federation did not take part.

[46] A/HRC/25/63, para. 94 (a).

[47] Ibid., para. 94 (g).

recommendations and to support to a United Nations system-wide "Rights up Front" response to the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In this context, the Special Rapporteur is fully cognizant of the important humanitarian work that the United Nations and other entities are doing in the country. He draws attention to the commission's recommendations, and indeed that of the Special Rapporteur throughout his work, that States should not use the provision of food and other essential humanitarian assistance to impose economic or political pressure on the State. Humanitarian assistance should be provided in accordance with humanitarian and human rights principles, including the principle of non-discrimination. Aid should only be curbed to the extent that unimpeded international humanitarian access and related monitoring is not adequately guaranteed.[48] The Special Rapporteur hopes that all parts of the United Nations system will rise to the challenge and work and deliver in a coordinated and unified manner, as envisaged in the Secretary-General's "Rights up Front" initiative in response to the commission's report.

61. In its resolution 25/25, the Human Rights Council specifically requested the Office of the High Commissioner to follow up urgently on the recommendations made by the commission of inquiry in its report, and to provide the Special Rapporteur with increased support, including through the establishment of a field-based structure to strengthen monitoring and documentation of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to ensure accountability, to enhance engagement and capacity-building with the Governments of all States concerned, civil society and other stakeholders, and to maintain visibility of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including through sustained communications, advocacy and outreach initiatives. The Special Rapporteur stresses that the implementation of that recommendation requires the proactive engagement of all parties concerned with the utmost urgency. In order for the field-based structure to be effective, it has to build on the achievements of the commission of inquiry. The Special Rapporteur considers it important for the structure to be as near as possible to the main source of information, and its impact also partly depends on whether its presence in the region is felt. It must also be able to function with the same independence and objectivity as the commission, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations. Given the persistent denial of access to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it is not realistic to establish a field-based structure in Pyongyang. All things considered, it was the commission's view that the Republic of Korea would be the optimal location for the field structure. The Special Rapporteur welcomes that the acceptance by the Republic of Korea to host the structure.[49] He hopes that the structure will be soon operational and trusts that its staff will be able to function in full accordance with the principles of the United Nations and with unimpeded access to witnesses, in order to ensure the continuation of monitoring and documentation of evidence.

[48] Ibid., para. 94 (i).

[49] See the OHCHR press briefing at www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14653&LangID=E.

62. **Lastly, the Special Rapporteur pays tribute to the incessant work of civil society, which has played a decisive role in bringing the human rights agenda of the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as far as it has come today. In this new phase of work, the Special Rapporteur encourages civil society actors, regardless of their location, ideology, focus or approach to the way forward, to work together.**